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CHIEF**

**Bold Chieftain  
takes top prize in  
Sunshine Millions**



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## Specialists in Success

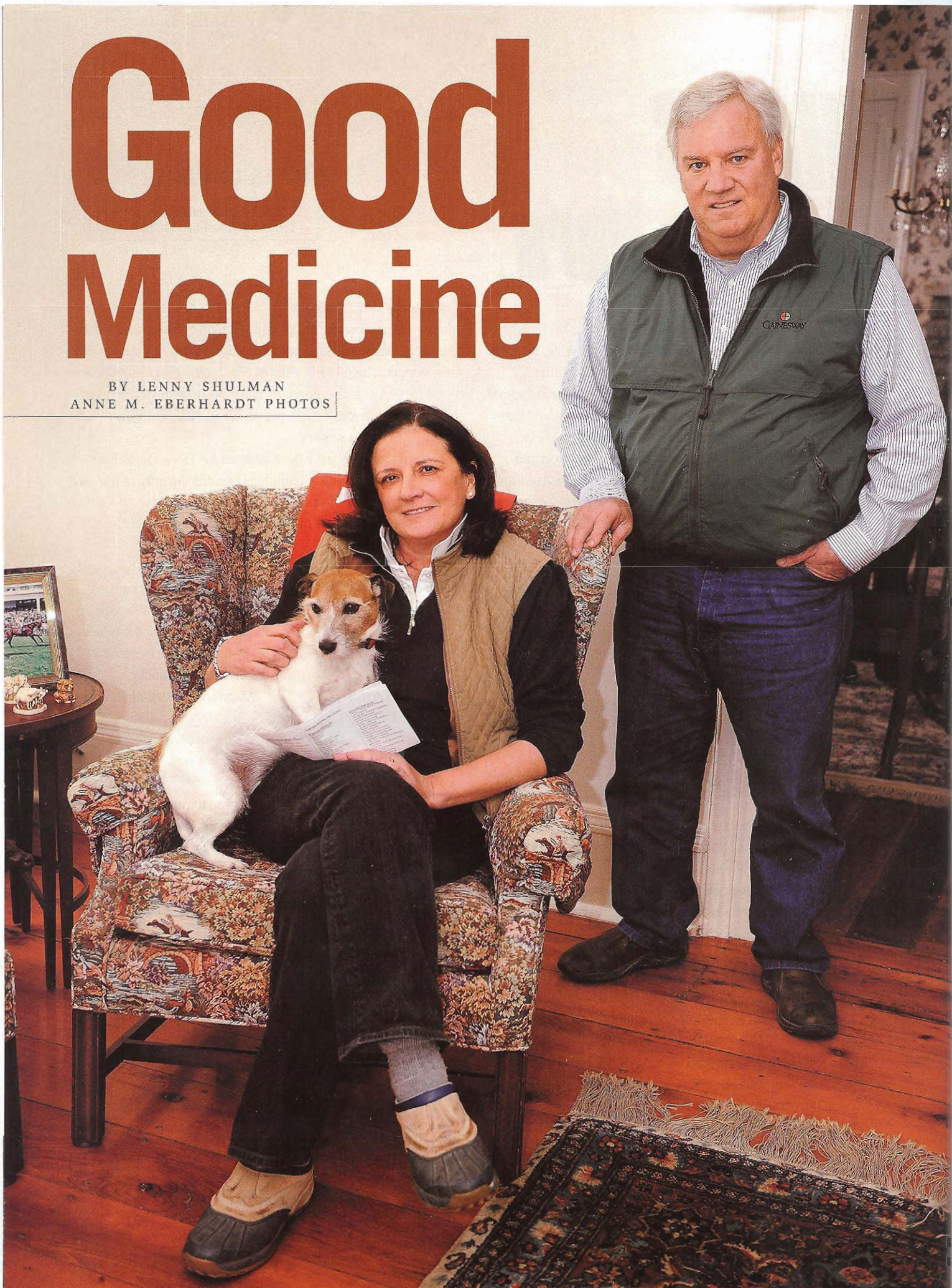
**DRS. CHUCK KIDDER AND  
NANCY COLE OPERATE  
BOOMING BREEDING BUSINESS  
AT CORNER WOODS FARM**



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# Good Medicine

BY LENNY SHULMAN  
ANNE M. EBERHARDT PHOTOS



**D**rs. Charles “Chuck” Kidder and Nancy Cole have a problem that anyone in the horse business would love to face. They’ve bred, co-bred, and/or co-owned so many stakes winners and successful runners the past couple of years, they’re having a hard time keeping track of all of them.

After a recent hour-long interview at their lovely Corner Woods Farm east of Lexington, the veterinarians, married since 1989, called back to inform the writer they’d forgotten about co-breeding Breeders’ Cup runner Connie and Michael; and they’d also overlooked co-owning graded stakes winner Necessary Evil; and, oh, yes, they failed to mention they also co-bred graded stakes winners Abraaj and Leelanau out of their mare Kris’s Intention.

## *Drs. Chuck Kidder and Nancy Cole share the Midas touch*

What’s a pair of successful professionals to do? They are involved in enough breeding and racing partnerships that keeping all of them straight can be a full-time job. What they know quite well is they are the breeders of 2009 Sentient Jet Breeders’ Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (gr. I) winner and champion female sprinter Informed Decision and 2009 Dixiana Breeders’ Futurity (gr. I) victor Noble’s Promise. And having had 26 horses that qualified for breeders’ awards in 2009, that pair is just the latest in a long line of top runners with whom they’re associated.

Dr. Cole hails from Rockford, Ill., and graduated vet school at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. While in school, she met Dr. Walter Kaufman of Claiborne Farm, and then Dr. Fred Arnold, who brought her to Kentucky in 1984 to work with both Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds.

Dr. Kidder was raised on a farm in Bethel, Ky., near Dr. Eslie Asbury’s Forest Retreat Farm in Carlisle. Kidder’s grandfather knew Asbury, and the young man became acquainted with farm manager Gail Hughes and farm vet Dr. Johnny Griggs. After graduating vet school at Ohio State University and interning with Dr. D.L. Proctor, Kidder was hired by Griggs to join his practice in 1976, and the pair has been partners in medicine and breeding and racing Thoroughbreds ever since.

“I’ve known him since he was in high school,” said Griggs. “He was impressive then, and he’s turned out that way. He’s very intelligent, has good judgment and common sense, and has always had a willingness to work. I guess that’s a rare combination.”

Cole early on worked with Dr. Arnold at Hamburg Place Farm, where she cared for Alysheba and got a taste of the Kentucky Derby trail. Kidder worked with Griggs at Greentree, which merged into Gainesway, which got him around horses such as Foolish Pleasure, Stage Door Johnny, and

“My grandparents raised cattle and I worked rustling them up, but I became more enamored with the horses I was riding than the cows I was looking for,” Kidder said. “Dr. Griggs was a breeder and he was an influence, and then we were working for Lee Eaton and Cap Hershey, and Gail Hughes, so finding a farm seemed like the thing to do. Raising horses has always held as much interest for me as veterinary medicine. Plus, at the time, the farms we were working as vets had overflow, and people needed someplace to board horses. I bought this farm (Corner Woods) in 1979 and soon my clients were giving me their overflow to board, so I got to deepen my relationship with them. My parents moved here, and we started with a little broodmare band of five or 10 mares, and it’s evolved from there.”

Cole’s independent practice, from



Some of the hardware earned by Kidder and Cole’s Stellar Jayne

Stop the Music.

“It was an ambulatory practice from the back of our cars,” noted Kidder. “Back in the ‘70s, you went and did whatever you were called for. You had no place to refer. You might call for more help, but you didn’t leave the mare until you got an outcome. Then the hospitals came along, and we were very quick to embrace them since we would refer and get off the night medicine rounds.

“When I started, there were two distinct seasons—the foaling season happened, and when that was over, many vets would leave for six months. But with the commercial sales clients we had, you became a sale veterinarian as well as a broodmare vet, so that evolved into a year-round cycle. Even though we had a 100% broodmare practice, we’d ended up taking care of the foals and yearlings as well.”

Having been bitten by the horse bug first at his grandfather’s farm and again in vet school, Kidder was determined to buy his own farm in the Lexington area.

which she recently retired, concentrated on equine reproduction and the yearling sales. Her clients included Dixiana, Spendthrift, and the Kentucky Horse Park, on whose board she currently serves. Both Kidder and Cole benefited from working for clients active in the sales, including Eaton, who solicited their opinions.

“There was a committee of people who would pull out every horse and everybody would grade them,” Cole said.

Added Kidder, “Early on I would stand there and say to myself, ‘What are they seeing?’ But then you start getting it after hours and hours of looking with people who knew what they were talking about.

“We worked for a lot of other people at sales besides Lee, but he had us examine each horse pre-sale to make sure it fit the conditions of sale. So you got to look at hundreds of throats and read X-rays. And you learned that even though a certain horse wouldn’t sell well, it didn’t mean the horse couldn’t race. That goes for conformation, X-rays, and scoping. So as a breeder, when

## Drs. Kidder & Cole

some of those horses come your way, you learn that one can train even though it didn't sell. Everybody kind of knows that, but when you see it so many times, it really reinforces it. So that's an advantage of doing vet work.

"You're also invited on to so many farms and meet very top managers, and you watch what they do. So you get to incorporate what you thought were the best things into your own operation."

That operation got off to a fast start. The farm's first two boarders were sent to Kidder by Eaton to be prepped for sale. While one, Chris Evert, was withdrawn from the auction, the other, Tournament Star, brought \$1.9 million. So Corner Woods' first boarding experience was positive. Also, one of the first mares Kidder purchased was Amya, in foal to Vigors and with a One for All colt by her side. Kidder raised the One for All colt, Agent Double, who won the 1984 Prix Royal-Oak (French St. Leger, Fr-I) and three other stakes; and with his parents, he bred and raised Air de Cour, the Vigors colt, who won the 1986 Prix du Cadran (Fr-I) and three other stakes. Both colts became stallions.

"Those were the first horses I raised here," said Kidder. "So that got me started that either I was lucky, or I could breed a horse."

Certainly the relationships established with other doctors as well as clients have proved key to the success of the Kidder and Cole operation. Neil Howard, who was Lee Eaton's farm manager, is now at Gainesway, where Kidder does vet business, and the pair participate in various partnerships. Brian Graves of Gainesway is a partner in a pinhooking operation with them. Mickey and Karen Taylor, of Seattle Slew fame, boarded mares at Corner Woods and entered into a foal-sharing deal involving their great stallion. Slamya, a 21-year-old broodmare by Seattle Slew (out of Amya) still producing for Kidder and Cole, is a result of that partnership. Then there was the partnership among them, Griggs, and California-based attorney Jim Mamakos and his son Jason, a trainer.

"In the early '90s, before everyone was getting on the computer to do the same thing, we began claiming a number of horses with the idea of eventually making them broodmares," said Cole. "Jason had a trainer's license, and they got to see a lot of horses out there."

One mare that came out of that arrangement was Alaska Queen.

Claimed for \$13,500, Alaska Queen, by Time for a Change, has turned into a foundation mare for the operation. Her colt by Hennessy, Keats, bred by Group One (a partnership formed by Kidder, Griggs, and Jeff Morris of Highclere) and J. Mamakos, won the 2001 Coolmore Lexington Stakes (gr. II). Alaska Queen subsequently pro-

duced a Giant's Causeway colt named Fairbanks, bred by Kidder, Griggs, and J. and J. Mamakos. Fairbanks brought a bid of \$1.85 million from Team Valor at the 2004 Fasig-Tipton Saratoga yearling auction and won the Hawthorne Gold Cup (gr. II) and two other stakes. He stands at stud in Pennsylvania.

Kris's Intention, another modest buy, has, for the same breeding partnership, produced two successful Carson City runners. Abraaj took the 2008 Alfred G. Vanderbilt Handicap (gr. II) while Leelanau scored in the 2001 Kentucky Breeders' Cup Stakes (gr. III), setting a track record at Churchill Downs of 1:03.11 for 5½ furlongs.

"They've masterminded a situation where they can spread capital around and diversify, which has been a good model in this business for years," said Morris. "They're multidimensional and through the partnerships have been able to protect horses and keep them to race. They are very well-positioned."

Nancy Cole has also proven to possess a fine eye when it comes to purchasing mares. At the 2004 Keeneland November mixed sale, she gave \$30,000 for the His Majesty mare Palangana in foal to Monarchos. Kidder and Cole became the breeders of the subsequent foal, which they sold for \$150,000 as a yearling at Fasig-Tipton Kentucky. That one would become Informed Decision, winner of the 2009 Sentient Jet Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Sprint, Humana Distaff Stakes (gr. I), and Vinery Madison Stakes (gr. I) for George Strawbridge's Augustin Stable. Informed Decision, who comes back to the races this year as a 5-year-old, has already banked more than \$1.7 million.

"They are good with picking horses out from the sale ring," noted Fasig-Tipton chairman Walt Robertson. "They work at it; they live it. Not only has Chuck become a great horse breeder, but Nancy is plenty smart in her own right and a huge asset."

Cole also bought The Devil's Trick privately from actor and horseman Sam Shepard. Kidder and Cole had bought into Cuvee as part of a racing partnership and stayed in on the horse as syndicate owners, so they bred The Devil's Trick to him and came up with Noble's Promise, who won last year's Dixiana Breeders' Futurity and earned \$733,500 in his 2-year-old campaign for Chasing Dreams Racing 2008.

"Someone asked me what that nick was," laughed Kidder, "and I



Noble's Promise



Informed Decision



Stellar Jayne

said, 'a stallion share.' "

Even when a deal initially looked grim, it's still turned out well for Kidder and Cole. They bought a weanling filly in 2001 for \$150,000 as part of a pinhooking partnership, blowing their entire budget on a horse that nobody wanted as a yearling. So they decided to race the filly, whom they named Stellar Jayne. She ended up winning most of her \$1.5 million for them, including the 2004 Gazelle Handicap (gr. I) and Mother Goose Stakes (gr. I), defeating champion Ashado in the latter. To add the icing and cherry to the cake, Stellar Jayne sold as a 3-year-old at the 2004 Keeneland November sale for \$3.6 million. Park Avenue, another proposed pinhook that didn't pan out, wound up earning \$208,000 racing for a syndicate including Kidder and Cole after Group One purchased him at auction as a weanling for \$32,000. Stakes winner Time's Mistress and stakes-placed Solid Platinum and Stealin' Kisses all earned six figures on the racetrack for Kidder and Cole.

But breeding remains the operation's bread and butter. Kidder and Cole own, alone or in partnership, some 60 mares that are kept on the 200 acres of Corner Woods. Griggs, whose farm sits just across the road, has another 15 owned by the partners, while Kidder and Cole are also partners with Bill Betz in an additional 10 mares. There are five barns and four residences on Corner Woods, whose staff of five includes Kidder's son, Ben, who also assists his father's medical practice as a vet tech. Karen Goss handles running the

## Chuck Kidder and Nancy Cole

Profession: Veterinarians (Cole is retired)

Farm: Corner Woods

Stakes winners bred or co-bred: Informed Decision, Noble's Promise, SwingfortheFences, Abraaj, Leelanau, Bobcat Greeley, For Dixie, Casino Evil, Orientate Express, All Trumps, P. S. U. Grad, Fairbanks, Keats, Congressional Page

Stakes winners owned or co-owned: Necessary Evil, Time's Mistress, Stellar Jayne

*"We were spoiled as young veterinarians to be around great horses. At the end of Seattle Slew's life, nearly every mare Mickey and Karen Taylor had was bred to him, and they were boarded here, so it was satisfying to be part of that."*

Chuck Kidder

*"I was privileged to work at the Kentucky Horse Park and take care of Forego until the very end."*

Nancy Cole

offices of both the farm and Kidder and Griggs' vet practice.

As far as a program goes, Kidder and Cole, following the lead of Lee Eaton, prefer to give their horses as much time outside as possible.

"Lee raised Bold Forbes that way and showed you could do that as long as the horse is handled so that it has manners," said Kidder. "The other thing is to worm and vaccinate on a rigid schedule. It's eas-

ier to treat a well horse than a sick horse. We've stayed with a pellet feed program because we've had success raising nice horses on it."

Added Cole, "We're watchful as to what we're feeding and also paying attention to the trace minerals. Once you find out what works on your farm and in your pastures, and you see the decrease in X-ray changes, that's what you do.

"The other thing we do religiously once a month is have Dr. Griggs and Brian Graves come out for shows, where we all take a good look at every weanling and yearling and take notes to see if something is going the wrong way or if something didn't get trimmed just right or to note development."

"That was a Lee Eaton/Jeff Morris discipline," said Kidder, "to look at your own horses with a small committee so you're not 'owner-blind' and missing changes that are too subtle because you see the horse every day."

Said Betz, "It takes a unique individual to have talent in both areas, because vet work and breeding are two very different things. Chuck has participated in so many facets of this industry and brings a unique perspective to whatever comes down the road."


With dozens of mares to breed, Kidder and Cole have quite a bit of decision-making when it comes to selecting stallions.

"We use the whole melting pot of stallions," noted Cole. "We look hard at the standing farm, since some are much more user-friendly for us than others. And we also like farms that support their yearlings since we're primarily in the commercial yearling market. We look for nicks, and we look at types, going around and looking at the stallions."

"And you can't be afraid to make your own nick," added Kidder. "Just because it hasn't been tried doesn't mean it can't be successful. Alaska Queen was the only Time for a Change mare bred to Hennessy his first year, and that became Keats. Same thing with Giant's Causeway, which became Fairbanks.

"The other thing is we go around and look at a lot of weanlings at the sale and come away with an opinion of stallions we like. That's more of a conformation nick. And our partners look too, which gives us more opinions and ideas."

While they used to ski, Kidder and Cole are content to ride some geldings around the farm in their spare time, most of which is taken up with following their horses at tracks around the country. Outside one of the Corner Woods mare barns, Kidder points to a nearby Cadillac sedan. "I still do plenty of vet work for outside clients out of the trunk. Not truck. Trunk. I'm like Marcus Welby.

"When your vocation can be your avocation, it doesn't get any better than that." 



Ben Kidder holds Alaska Queen, the dam of Fairbanks and Keats